The Policeman's Beard Was What? Representation and Reality in Knowledge Organization and Description

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Abstract
Information professionals describing resources are often faced with decisions around a resource's formal identifying characteristics. Sometimes these characteristics, such as title or publication date, present information known to be deceptive, incorrect, or untrue in some way. Sometimes facts needed to identify the resource or help a user understand its nature are missing or incomplete. This paper identifies four ways resources fail to fully identify themselves, through unintentional error or inaccuracy; deception; simplifying complex reality; or humorous representation. It presents four categories of response that an information professional such as a library cataloger might engage: correct or clarify; reveal the hidden, missing, or disguised; assist users in navigating and understanding complex realities; no action or response. Response categories are illustrated with instructions from rules and guidelines representing two centuries of Anglo-American cataloging rules. The conclusion stresses the importance of these responses in facilitating a successful user experience with information systems.
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1 Introduction

I often tell my students that information resources are like people, each one unique, making the processes of describing and organizing information resources engaging as well as challenging. One of the issues that surfaces in resource description is what to do when we know that a resource is, in some way or another, not representing itself truthfully, correctly, or fully. A resource's formal identifying features – its title, creator name, date of publication, etc. – may be either missing or incomplete in some important way or make a claim that we know not to be true or that we would dispute. They may simplify a complex reality. For example, we now know that the lead vocals on the album *Girl You Know It's True* are not the lead singers of the musical group Milli Vanilli, as they are attributed on the inserts of the original American release.[1] The well-known children's book, *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs,* presents a title page claiming the work to be "by A. Wolf."[2] As these two examples suggest, sometimes the reasons for representations not matching reality involve deception, and sometimes not. In the case of the *Three Little Pigs*, one might consider the phrase "by A. Wolf" to make no real claim about reality because it's a joke that the author anticipates readers will understand.

Misrepresentations that appear in a resource's formal identifying features, whether to amuse or to deceive, caused through inattention or intention, require an information professional describing that resource to make a series of decisions. Should errors or blatantly false statements be corrected in the description of that resource? For resources exhibiting complex bibliographic histories or relationships, how much of that should we describe, if we describe it at all? In this paper, I address these questions first by categorizing "reality and representation" choices that information professionals may be called to make when describing resources. I then look to the history of cataloging rules and guidelines and identify four types of guidance or response that have been outlined by the library community in response to these choices. I conclude by highlighting the importance of our professional responses in facilitating a positive user experience with information systems.

[1] "Milli Vanilli" (n.d.) In *Wikipedia, at*: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milli_Vanilli#Media_backlash.
[2] Scieszka and Smith, (1989).

2 A Tour of Reality and Representation in Information Resources

The issues at play when a resource's representation of itself conflicts in some way with what an information professional knows to be true or oversimplifies complex points in its identity or content raises questions around the description of that resource. Following are categories of misrepresentation that may occur in a resource's formal identifying features:

- Representations involving errors or other unintentional inaccuracies
- Representations involving deception
- Representations presenting complex realities
- Humorous representations

These categories are useful, I hope, because each one suggests a different set of responses and principles to guide the information professional in decision-making.

2.1 Representations involving errors or other unintentional inaccuracies

Errors and other inaccuracies appear frequently, even in carefully constructed resources such as books published by major publishing houses. Library catalogers discover typos and other errors in the materials they catalog on a regular basis. Sometimes errors are easy to discover, such as clear typographic errors. Other times, some knowledge may be required to detect a misrepresentation. For instance, in 1997, Paul Solomon edited the proceedings for *7th ASIS SIG/CR Proceedings of the Classification Research Workshop.* Although his name was correctly represented as "Paul Solomon" in on the title page, on the book cover, he was represented as "Peter Solomon." Only those of us who know Paul or who attended the Workshop might have noticed that the "Peter" on the cover was a mistake, not simply a nickname or the correct first name.

Some mistakes are legendary in that although they were discovered during the publication process in time to be corrected, they moved forward without correction. Some uncertainty surrounds the actual circumstances of the case, but in 1967, Quentin Fiore and Marshall McLuhan published a book they supposedly had intended to entitle *The Medium is the Message.* The story goes that when the proofs came to the authors for review, the title appeared as: *The Medium is the Massage.* McCluhan himself had apparently played around with the expression "the medium is the massage" and so it was left as is.[3] A similar story explains how a writer born as William Falkner became William Faulkner – apparently proofs came back from his first book with his last name spelled with a "u" and he decided to leave it as-is.[4]

2.2 Representations involving deception or hiding

Many people throughout the history of publishing have, for a wide variety of reasons, wanted to use names other than their own or to publish anonymously. Women, for instance, have written under male names to increase the chance of their work being accepted for publication because of prejudicial opinions about women writers. Famous examples include Mary Ann (Marian) Evans, wrote under the name George Eliot[5], and the Brontë sisters, who wrote under the names Currer (Charlotte), Ellis (Emily), and Acton (Anne) Bell. Some write under different names to distinguish the different genres of writing they do. Charles Dodgson, for example, wrote scholarly works on mathematics using his real name, but used the name Lewis Carroll when he wrote *belles lettres*. In other cases, people use pseudonyms to remain anonymous to avoid retribution or other negative consequences.

[3] The story actually varies quite a bit, see, for example, McCluhan's son Eric's website, *Marshall McCluhan: Common Questions,* at: http://www.marshallmcluhan.com/common-questions/ and *Wikipedia's* "The Medium is the Massage," at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Medium_Is_the_Massage#Origin_of_the_title.

[4] The story of how Falkner became Faulkner also varies, see *Wikipedia* "William Faulkner," at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Faulkner and Bio. "William Faulkner Biography," at: http://www.biography.com/people/william-faulkner-9292252#synopsis

[5] Rooney (2006). Rooney states "That she chose a pseudonym is hardly surprising. Many women writers took this path, most without being accused, as Eliot has been, of an unseemly identification with male prerogatives and attitudes. Pseudonymity offers the writer a mask."

The advent of social media has brought a new wave of hiding identity through use of pseudonyms, although the reasons for it have not changed much over the centuries. In a blog post entitled "'Real Names' Policies Are an Abuse of Power," danah boyd (2011) notes:

> The people who most heavily rely on pseudonyms in online spaces are those who are most marginalized by systems of power. **"Real names" policies aren't empowering; they're an authoritarian assertion of power over vulnerable people.**[6]

Recently, in a widely discussed and controversial case of online "outing," the political blogger "publius" explained that his desire for anonymity stemmed from multiple concerns around his position as an untenured faculty member, his reluctance to have students associate him with strong political opinions, and avoidance of linking family members to politics they don't share with him.[7]

It's probably safe to say that most of the examples in this category involve personal names and identities. However, sometimes works are published that contain false or misleading information about their own identities. In the first centuries of printed books, for example, before the developments of standards and easy checking mechanisms, falsification of publication information was common. So common, in fact, that Gustave Brunet, a French bibliographer, compiled several reference works listing books with fictitious imprints.[8]

Work identity may be compromised through plagiarism or other deceptions. A relatively recent example of (potential) plagiarism involves James Mackey, a well-known biographer. Copies of his *I Have Not Yet Begun to Fight: A Life of John Paul Jones* were quickly pulled from shelves by the publisher after evidence of plagiarism surfaced.[9] Another plagiarism case involves the detection of passages in Richard Condon's *Manchurian Candidate* that had been copied from Robert Graves' *I, Claudius*.[10]

A perhaps less egregious type of deception is to republish works with small changes calling them "new editions" to improve sales or to mask price hikes. Recently an acquaintance of mine at the University of Washington confessed, as to a crime, that he had succumbed to the wishes of his publisher to produce a "new edition" of his work by writing a new introduction. The work itself was unchanged.

2.3 Representations presenting complex realities

Complex realities challenge the information professional to understand, determine, pursue, and sometimes arbitrarily decide the particulars of an information resource's "reality" and further, to decide how, or whether, to indicate them to a user. As is the case with representations involving deception and hiding, complexity often occurs around the names of persons and organizations. When formal identifying features, such as names, change or vary in form, access to works associated with a person or organization can be compromised, so it is important for information professionals to be alert to issues around naming. Persons change their names for many reasons. Sometimes these changes are permanent, sometimes not. For example, people who get married (Mrs. Humphy Ward) and divorced (Kris Kardashian, now Kris Jenner) frequently change their surnames. Sometimes people simply don't like the names they were given at birth, so they change them. It is common for people to use multiple names simultaneously, for example, when they use a nickname in addition to their given name, or they use initials as well as their first and middle names (Efthi Efthimiadis, E. N. Efthimiadis and Efthimis Nicholai Efthimiadis). Daniel Manus Pinkwater publishes his works under every possible variation of Daniel Manus (Daniel Manus Pinkwater, D.M. Pinkwater, D. Pinkwater, M. Pinkwater, D. Manus Pinkwater, and Daniel M. Pinkwater). Similarly, companies and other organizations change their names as a result of mergers, divestures, or changes in focus. Sometimes, they are referred to or even formally change their names to an initialized or translated form, for example, Southwestern Bell Corporation became SBC Communications in 1995.

Personal religious transformations may be accompanied by a significant name change or associated with complex naming practices. Cassius Clay famously became Muhammad Ali, and Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu

[6] Emphasis in original.
[7] Etheridge (2009).
[8] Taylor and Mosher (1951), *p.* 200-201.
[9] Blumenthal and Lyall (1999).
[10] Lara (2003).

became Sister Theresa. Other religious transformations engender name changes that are not so simple. The current Dalai Lama, for instance, is well-known by that name, and if I refer to "the Dalai Lama" most people will know exactly who I am talking about. However, the name "Dalai Lama" is a title, and the person who is currently known by that name is the 16th person to have had it. If we weren't trying to organize knowledge around multiple Dalai Lamas in our information systems, then perhaps it wouldn't matter so much that this name is actually a title, but, in fact, searching for the Dalai Lama in large library catalogs can be an extremely confusing experience because of it.

The identity and naming of works can be even more complex than that of people and organizations. Musical works such as operas, for example, are composed of two parts, music and words, which can be published or written about separately. One person (or more) may have written the music, another person (or more) may have written the words. The words may be translated into other languages by a translator, and the music may be transcribed or arranged for other instruments by another person or persons. A lyricist can write new words for previously existing music, and new music may be composed for existing lyrics. One of the most recognizable examples of this is "God save the queen" (lyrics sung in the UK) and "My country tis of thee" (lyrics sung in the US). Performance adds another layer of descriptive information (who performed, when or where did they perform, playing time) and hence, another layer of descriptive complexity as well.

Stories in whatever form - text, sound, moving image – can be adapted, abridged, condensed, edited, translated or sequeled. Older, well-known works of fiction are especially prone to metamorphosis. Sometimes works are so well-known that people creating adaptations of them don't even mention their connection with the original - many movie versions of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* have been produced, some close to the original, some not. Not infrequently, adaptations that take many liberties with the original story don't claim any association with the original (the movie *Scrooged*, for example). In these cases, especially when the associations are immediately known to the information professionals describing them, is it important to note the association?

Sometimes the identifying characteristics of works and their creators are clearly represented and understood, but nonetheless perplexing to knowledge organizers. One well-known species of authorship gave birth to an infamous[11] rule in the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR, 13C)* addressing spirit communications. Spirit communications are works that describe themselves as being by the spirit of a well-known person (*The Celestial Voice of Diana: Her Spiritual Guidance to Finding Love*, channeled by Rita Eide). These works are clearly represented, but how should we describe them? Should we treat the person or persons who channel the works as authors? If we do, are we misrepresenting the work in some significant way? If we don't, doesn't it also misrepresent the work to claim that it is by the person channeled? *AACR2* chose a middle ground, qualifying the name with the term "Spirit," in this case, "Diana, Princess of Wales, 1961-1997 (Spirit)."

New technologies have also given rise to perplexing creations. An uncomfortable reality that presented itself to library catalogers in 1984 was the first book written by a computer program. This book, *The Policeman's Beard Was Half Constructed*, was written by Racter, a text-generating program created by William Chamberlain and Thomas Etter. To library catalogers, only people can be authors (authorship by corporate bodies was denied in the first edition of *AACR2* in 1978), so a long discussion ensued among catalogers on an international discussion list about how to represent Racter in the cataloging record. In logic only a cataloger can follow, the decision about *The Policeman's Beard* was to provide access to Racter through a title access point (Racter, as a computer program, is a work, therefore identified by title) and to represent Chamberlain and Etter as authors.

The internet has given rise to many new types of resources and an environment in which innovation and invention present variations in resources all the time. Internet resources vary widely in how – and sometimes if – they identify themselves. Again, even when the circumstances around an internet resource are clear, it may be challenging to create a description that will facilitate identification and discovery in an information system.

Some complex realities may push the boundaries of what we mean by "complex." Works exist that make claims about realities that are not simply complex, but contested. We can all think of examples – works

[11] Infamous not because of the rule's provisions, but because such a rare bibliographic condition was acknowledged in a cataloging code.

that claim the Holocaust didn't happen, for instance. These works and their claims would, we hope, make knowledge organizers consider carefully how to represent them. Here, the knowledge organizer must recognize that a decision not to explain – to ignore the contested reality presented by the work – is a decision that could be viewed as an implicit endorsement of the creator's worldview.

2.4 Humorous representations

One of my colleagues at the University of Washington, David M. Levy (2001), defines documents as "talking things" (p. 23). He argues that a document is anything that we create to communicate for us. Although many of the resources information professionals concern themselves with are results of serious talk, sometimes the talk we are concerned with aims to make people laugh. And sometimes, making people laugh is accomplished by playing with the prominent identifying features in a resource such as an author name or a title.

Humorous title pages abound in children's books, especially picture books. One author, Jon Scieszka, is noted for wicked title page humor. His first book, entitled *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, claims to be "by A. Wolf, as told to Jon Scieszka…" Daniel Pinkwater, another well-known children's author, is identified as "Honest Dan'l Pinkwater" in his picture book *Roger's Umbrella*. Sometimes (a little more seriously, but not much), works are written under the names of fictitious characters. An example is the oeuvre of Miss Piggy, aka Miss Piggy (Moi),[12] including *The Diva Code: Miss Piggy on Life, Love, and the 10,000 Idiotic Things ~~Men~~ Frogs Do* and *In the Kitchen with Miss Piggy: Fabulous Recipes from My Fabulous Celebrity Friends.* Playful attributions aren't limited to the world of children's books. Barbara Bush (with others) wrote a White House memoir under the name of the Bush's dog Millie (*Millie's Book*, as told to Barbara Bush).

Although these types of humor might seem to represent playing with reality that is obvious, an appropriate or helpful response by an information professional making a representation is not always so obvious. Humor is often culturally specific, and in today's world, we cannot assume that everyone will understand a joke, no matter how apparent it may seem to us. In the case of Scieszka's *True Story of the Three Little Pigs,* a child or unknowing adult might cite as author or search for "A. Wolf" not understanding the intended humor. Should information professionals not consider this possibility, and identify "A. Wolf" as an author even though recognizing it as a joke?

3 Reality and Library Cataloging

A foundational principle of library cataloging is to faithfully represent the resource being cataloged and to describe what is found in it accurately; in other words, to represent it as it represents itself.[13] This principle rests in recognizing that the way an item identifies itself is likely to be the way people will cite it and, hence, how people will search for it. We see this principle in cataloger prescriptions such as "title page sanctity" which says, essentially, don't mess with the formal identifying information that an item presents about itself – record it as it appears. This principle is formalized in cataloging rules that direct us to transcribe (copy) formal identifying information from an information resource. However, even as some rules direct us to transcribe something we know to be incorrect, other rules enjoin us to correct errors when we recognize them. Furthermore, if we know an important fact about a resource, something that will aid either in user access or identification, that does not appear on that resource, we may indicate it if we know it. For example, we are told in *AACR2* that we should include the name of any entity responsible for a resource even if it is not represented anywhere on or in it:

> *AACR2* 1988. 21.30. Make an added entry under the heading for any other name that would provide an important access point…

Some of the examples of the push and pull between reality and representation highlighted in the previous section are unique, and few if any cataloging principles, rules or guidelines have been developed to

[12] Miss Piggy is a puppet character appearing on the children's public television program *Sesame Street*.
[13] Svenonius and McGarry (2001), p. xv.

respond to them. However, principles, rules and guidelines do exist for many of the others, which can be broadly categorized into four types of responses:

- Correct and clarify
- Reveal the hidden, missing, or disguised
- Assist users in navigating and understanding complex realities
- No action or response.

In this section, I offer representative examples of principles and rules in each category that typify Anglo-American cataloging practice over the last two centuries.

3.1 Correct and clarify

Cataloging rules throughout modern Anglo-American cataloging history have prescribed correcting or otherwise clarifying errors and other inaccuracies, whether inadvertent or purposive, if they could be deceptive, confusing or unhelpful in some way to a user. Frequently, we are told to transcribe incorrect information if it is there, but to add correct or clarifying information. In other cases, we are told to ignore false or misleading information, and to simply present the correct information as we know it. Cataloging guidelines from the 19th century to the present give directions such as these:

> *Panizzi 1841* XLIII. Works falsely attributed in their title to a particular person, to be treated as pseudonymous.
>
> *AACR 1967.* 141A. An imprint date on the title page of a work is always recorded. If this date is known to be incorrect, the correct date is added in brackets.
>
> *LC 1949*. 3.4. … If a statement that is included in the body of the entry is inaccurate, it is recorded as it appears, followed either by the word "sic" or by the abbreviation "i. e." and the correction.
>
> *RDA 2013*. 0.4.3.5 Accuracy. The data describing a resource should provide supplementary information to correct or clarify ambiguous, unintelligible, or misleading representations made on sources of information forming part of the resource itself.

Mistake or not, it is likely that library users will use the term "message" instead of "massage" in searches for the well-known work by McCluhan and Fiore. In cases like these, a cataloger has the freedom to provide an access point for names and titles if they consider them to be important:

> *AACR2 1988*. 21.29C. … make an added entry … if some catalogue users might suppose that the description of an item would be found under that heading or title rather than under the heading or title chosen for the main entry.
>
> *RDA 2013*. 2.3.6.3 Record variant titles that re considered important for identification or access … and 2.3.6.2. Take variant titles from any source.

Multiple instances of provisions for other types of clarifications considered to be important are easily found:

> *Panizzi 1841*. XIX. Any striking imperfection in a book to be carefully noted; and any remarkable peculiarity, such as that of containing cancelled or duplicate leaves, *&c.* to be stated.
>
> *LC 1949*. 315C5. Notes…[regarding] physical description, supplementing the collation, to show that the actual amount of text is not correctly suggested by the collation, that there is text on covers, … to show peculiarities and irregularities …
>
> *AACR2 1988*. 1.1.F8. Add a word or short phrase to the statement of responsibility if the relationship between the title of the item and the person(s) or body (bodies) named in the statement is not clear ["Baijun ballads … / [collected by] Chet Williams."]

3.2 Reveal the hidden, missing or disguised: state what is known to be true

Catalogers are often directed to reveal important or helpful facts about a resource that have been purposely hidden, left out, or simply are not evident, if those facts are known.

> *ALA 1949*. 31. A. Enter under the name of an author … with the form subdivision SPURIOUS AND DOUBTFUL WORKS, works that have been transmitted as his … but which have later proved to be spurious or doubtful and excluded from the canon of his genuine works…

> *AACR2 1988*. 12.7B7. Relationships with other serials. Make notes on the relationship between the serial being described and any immediately preceding, immediately succeeding, or simultaneously published serial.

Early codes of Anglo-American cataloging rules frequently enjoined the cataloger to enter pseudonymous and anonymous works under the real names of authors when known:

> *Cutter 1876*. 5. Enter pseudonymous works under the author's real name, when it is known, with a reference from the pseudonym.

> *ALA 1949*. 30. Pseudonymous works. A. Enter works published under pseudonym under the author's real name when known … 32. Anonymous works. General rule. Enter works published anonymously under author when known.

When in 1988 cataloging practice shifted to providing access to persons under pseudonym in most instances, the cataloging community's continuing desire to reflect reality can be found in rules to link the real name of a person to the pseudonym:

> *RDA 2013.* 9.2.3 (Variant Name rule) .4 Real name … If the preferred name or names for an individual are pseudonyms and the individual does not use his or her real name as a creator or contributor and the individual's real name is known, then record the individual's real name as a variant name for each pseudonym. EXAMPLE: Cross, Marian Evans. Pseudonym recorded as preferred name: Eliot, George.

3.3 Assist Users in Navigating and Understanding Complex Realities

Cataloging rules and guidelines address complex realities in multiple ways: through rules and guidelines (mostly in the form of notes or explanatory references), through referral to cataloging principles or objectives, and through acknowledging uncertainty.

Rules and guidelines exist in most cataloging codes to instruct the cataloger to write notes or make references explaining the complexities exhibited in resources, for example:

> *ALA 1908* 168. Notes. Add notes when necessary to explain the title or to correct any misapprehension to which it might lead, and also to supply essential information about the author and bibliographical details not given in the title, imprint, or collation.

> *LC 1949*. 3:15C9. Notes… [make notes on] bibliographical history; relationship to other works (predecessors, successors, sequels, revisions which are substantially new works, supplements, indexes …) and to other editions of the same work.

> *RDA 2013.* 25.2.1.3. Record an explanation of the relationship between related works if considered important for identification or clarification [using an explanatory reference].

Sometimes codes of cataloging rules provide guidelines for highly specific types of complex cases. For example, *AACR2* has a rule that addresses spirit communications (e.g., written by the spirit of Abraham Lincoln):

> *AACR2 1988*. 21.26. Spirit communications. Enter a communication presented as having been received from a spirit under the heading for the spirit (see 22.14). Make an added entry under the heading for the medium or other person recording the communication.

However, in many (most?) instances, complex realities are dealt with not by particular rules, but an appeal to cataloging objectives. The first articulation of objectives for a library catalog, written by Charles A. Cutter, address multiple types of complex access problems:

> *Cutter 1876*, p. 10: [The catalog should:] 1. enable a person to find a book of which either (a) the author, (b) the title, (c) the subject is known; 2. show what the library has (d) by a given author, (e) on a given subject, (f) in a given kind of literature.

One of the implications of Cutter's first objective is that a cataloger would ensure access to all of the names a person has published under. If Muhammad Ali also published under the name Cassius Clay, the first objective says that if catalog users ought to be able to find resources he wrote under that name. The second objective says that if I'm interested in all of works by the person who has been known as either Muhammad Ali or Cassius Clay, I ought to be able to retrieve all of them together, regardless of the name he published under – those names should be linked in some way. Collocation of editions of some types of

works published under different titles was also recognized early on as an important principle for specific types of works such as such as sacred scriptures. Catalogers made sure that a person searching for the *Qur'an,* the *Vedas*, or the *Bible,* for example, would retrieve all of the editions regardless of the many different titles used.

The other problems given as examples in section 2 above could only be addressed by consulting and reflecting on these and other cataloging objectives and principles. The most recent set of international cataloging rules, *Resource Description and Access (RDA, 2013)* has incorporated many of them into its "Objectives and Principles Governing *Resource Description and Access*" (Guideline 0.4). In this statement, catalogers are asked to consider further principles such as accuracy, common usage or practice, uniformity, and cost in decision-making. It also recognizes that sometimes there are tradeoffs among principles that must be considered. For instance, it is not unusual for common usage to conflict with uniformity.

Sometimes, assisting users means to acknowledge a complex reality by letting them know when you don't really know something, especially when you are providing information that may be helpful, but you're not certain that it's true:

> *Panizzi 1841*. XVI. Christian names, included in parentheses, to follow the surname, and all to be written out in full, as far as they are known. *In case of doubt on this or any other point, when the librarian is directed to supply any information in cataloging, a note of interrogation to follow in such a position as to indicate clearly the point on which any doubt is entertained.*
>
> *AACR2 1988*. 1.4C6. If the place of publication, distribution, etc., is uncertain, supply the probable place in the language of the chief source of information, followed by a question mark.

3.4 No action or response

Sometimes, as the saying goes, the best thing to do is nothing at all. In the case of catalogers, an acceptable, even desirable, course of action is at times not correcting, clarifying, revealing, or assisting, but creating a representation that reflects a resource as it represents itself and leaving it at that. As Joseph T. Tennis notes in his recent article "Ethos and Ideology of Knowledge Organization: Toward Precepts for an Engaged Knowledge Organization" (2013), no action does not imply a lack of conscious choice, and cataloging rules and guidelines often dictate refraining from acting in some way. Sometimes not acting is indicated because of cost efficiency purposes, and other times because it is seen as the best option for users.

The practice of using the real names of pseudonymous authors to identify works has changed over time in an acknowledgement that some things that are hidden are best left so, especially considering user searching behavior. Cutter, who wrote the first widely used code of cataloging rules in 1876, recognized the difficulty in using the real names of authors over pseudonyms, even as he prescribed the practice in his rules. In the note glossing rule 5, he states:

> One is strongly tempted to deviate from this rule [entering under real name] in the case of writers like George Eliot and George Sand, Gavarni and Grandville, who appear in literature only under their pseudonyms. It would apparently be much more convenient to enter their works under the name by which alone they are known and under which everybody but a professed cataloguer would assuredly look first. [followed by a long list of arguments in favor of entering under real name] (p.18).

In a reversal of centuries of cataloging practice, catalogers now enter a work under a pseudonym if that work is published under one. Further, if a single person uses multiple pseudonyms, each of them is used; no attempt is made to collocate (retrieve together) all the works of a single person, although references are used to alert users of relationships among names of this sort. Finally, not only are catalogers told to identify the authors of works using pseudonyms, if present, they are also told to accept as authors entities that would, in previous codes of rules, never be considered as access points, much less components of work identifiers. With the adoption of RDA in 2013, catalogers may now treat Miss Piggy as a bona fide author, and users may search on her name without having to know the names of the series of persons who actually wrote the specific works they are looking for. Racter, the text-generating-computer-program

author, also might be considered as an author, depending on how one interprets "real non-human entities" in guideline 9.0:

> *RDA 2013.* 9.0, *Library of Congress, Program for Cooperative Cataloging Policy Statements* gives the following instruction: Apply this chapter ("Identifying persons") to fictitious entities and real non-human entities following the guidelines below…

While the above practices around identification and naming are responses to user needs, other practices relating to not acting are associated with to cost efficiency:

> *RDA 2013.*.3.4.5.5. Misleading Numbering. In some cases, the numbering on the last page, leaf, or column of a sequence does not represent the total number in that sequence. When this occurs, do not correct it unless it gives a completely false impression of the extent of the resource (e.g., when only alternate pages are numbered or when the number on the last page, leaf, or column of the sequence is misprinted).

However, in cases like these the cataloger is admonished not to alter only when it does not give "a completely false impression" of the resource to the user.

A core principle of cataloging is, as stated at the beginning of section 3, to represent an item as it represents itself. This principle is expressed in the title page sanctity prescription. To some degree, this prescription is an admonition to catalogers not to be *too* helpful. Over my years of teaching cataloging to beginners, I've often seen student attempts to help users result in egregious misrepresentations of resources. A part of cataloger training is to foster a user-centered approach that is tempered with a serious and careful attention to the resources one is cataloging.

4 Conclusion

In this paper I have identified issues in resource description that have to do with reality and representation in information resources. In investigating these issues, I outlined four major ways in which important information about a resource may be misrepresented, or insufficiently or inadequately presented: through unintentional error or inaccuracy, through deception, complex reality, and humor. I then presented four major categories of response that an information professional might engage: correct or clarify; reveal the hidden, missing, or disguised; assist users in navigating and understanding complex realities; no action or response.

Although the issues discussed here may seem like cataloger esoterica, they represent decision points upon which a user search may succeed or fail, and the time of a user vastly saved or wasted. A faculty member I met at a workshop some years ago, after hearing about my research area, told me a poignant story about her experience doing humanities research at Harvard University that illustrates this well. She was researching an obscure author whose papers were held by Harvard. When she looked in the library catalog, she found much less than she thought they had, but having faith in the catalog to tell her what was there, she spent two weeks engaging with the few documents she found. At the beginning of the third week, she happened to talk to a librarian who immediately suspected that she'd not found all of the documents Harvard held by this author. When the librarian searched, the faculty member learned that she'd searched under an alternate name that had not been linked to the name the library used for her author. As a consequence, she had only one week to work on the vast majority of the papers available for her research. Ironically, when this faculty member told me this story, it was not to complain about how much time she had wasted because of inadequate cataloging, but to praise the librarian who gave her access to the documents she needed to make her trip to Harvard a success.

In his article on ethics and knowledge organization, Tennis (2013) highlights the potential of information professionals to help or harm in their work. Decision-making around reality and representation issues is clearly – especially in the light the story just told – a process that has ethical implications. Failing to make a single link or to explain a single complex bibliographic relationship can cause serious harm – in Tennis's words, "not taking right action in knowledge organization practice is an act of violence" (p.44). It is important that we understand fully what we do when we describe, and that the consequences of our decisions have the potential to affect users in profound ways, both positively and negatively. This understanding of descriptive practice should motivate us to attend to the work of description with deep

attention. It should also remind us that engaging wholeheartedly with this work is, ultimately, fulfilling as well as challenging and engaging.

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